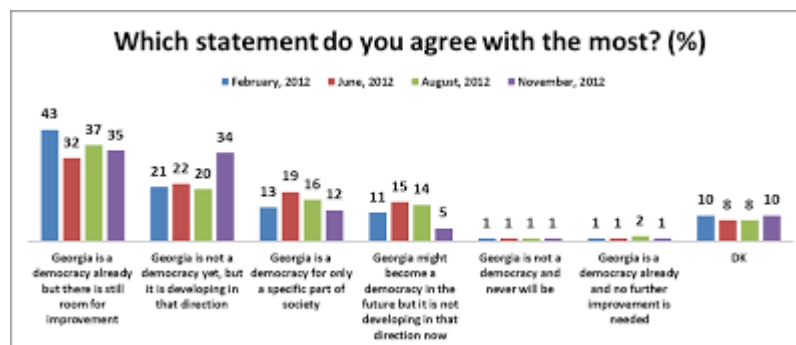


Friday, February 22, 2013

[Before and After the Elections: Shifting Public Opinion in Georgia](#)

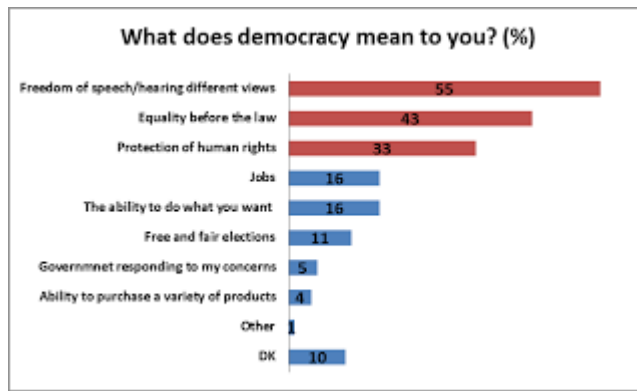
The Georgian parliamentary elections in October 2012 attracted much international interest and ushered in an important turn in Georgian politics. In 2012 CRRC conducted four waves of a [Survey on Political Attitudes in Georgia](#) for the National Democratic Institute (NDI) (funded by the Swedish International development Cooperation Agency-SIDA) in order to track changes in public opinion associated with these major political events. The fieldwork for these surveys took place in February, June, August and November and covered economic and political perceptions, attitudes toward democracy and on-going reforms, as well as various domestic and international affairs. Each wave surveyed about 2,000 people in Georgia. The data from NDI surveys allow comparative analysis of public opinion before and after the elections and reveal some interesting trends. This blog post aims to show two of many changes in public opinion that occurred in Georgia in 2012.

The first change discussed in this blog post concerns the perception of democracy in Georgia. Respondents in all waves of NDI survey were asked about their perceptions of democracy in Georgia before and after the elections. The percentage of people who think that Georgia is not a democracy yet, but it is developing in that direction significantly increased after the elections (34%). In line with that, the percentage of people who think that Georgia might become a democracy in the future, but it is not developing in that direction now decreased from 14% in August to 5% in November. To sum up, public opinion follows the opinion of some analysts (see Cory Welt in [CAD](#)) and after the elections more people in Georgia think that Georgia has a better chance to become a democracy in the future.



Source: NDI survey on political attitudes in Georgia, [Wave 9](#) (February, 2012), [Wave 10](#) (June, 2012), [Wave 11](#) (August, 2012), [Wave 12](#) (November, 2012)

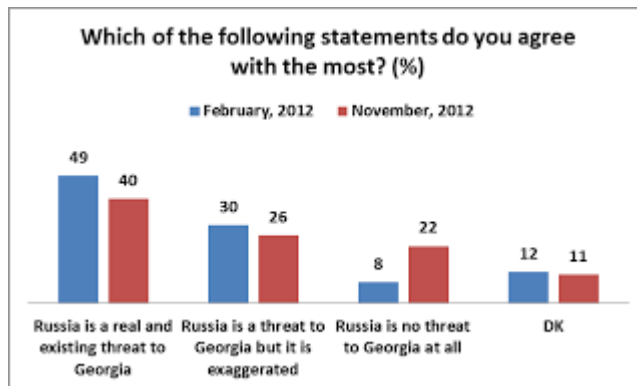
In order to shed more light on this picture it is useful to consider what Georgians mean by democracy. The question, “What does democracy mean to you?” was asked in all waves of survey. The result is more or less unchangeable throughout all four waves and thus only the latest data is shown. For just over half of the population, democracy means freedom of speech/hearing different views (55%), followed by equality before the law (43%) and protection of human rights (33%).



Source: NDI Survey on Political Attitudes in Georgia, [Wave 12](#) (November, 2012)

A second change relates to perceptions of Russia. As a [recent article](#) in the New York Times states, it was one of the campaign promises of Georgia’s new Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili “to repair the country’s badly frayed relationship with its huge neighbor”. The data shown on the chart indicate how public opinion reflects political changes and that the process of repairing the relationship between Georgia and Russia has already started in people’s minds.

In February and November 2012 CRRC, on behalf of NDI asked Georgians about their perceptions of Russia. The results show that the percentage of Georgians who think that Russia is no threat to Georgia at all increased significantly over the short period of time. In February only 8% of Georgians thought that Russia is no threat to Georgia at all, while this share increased to 22% in November. Respectively, there is a slight decrease in the number of people who think that Russia is a real and existing threat to Georgia (49% to 40%).



Source: NDI survey on political attitudes in Georgia, [Wave 9](#) (February, 2012), [Wave 12](#) (November, 2012)

To sum up, this blog has shown that political events which took place in 2012 are associated with some important changes in public opinion in Georgia. A question which could be worth further exploration is if political events influence public opinion or if public opinion allows political changes to happen? What do you think is the case in Georgia? We would like to hear your thoughts on that.

If you are interested in exploring further data from NDI surveys, you can download power point presentations from [here](#).